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EDITORIAL NOTES

The *Elementary School Teacher* is glad to give as wide publicity as possible to an announcement made by Mr. S. A. Courtis of the Home and Day School, Detroit, Michigan. Mr. Courtis has put his arithmetic tests, which will be familiar to readers of this journal, into such form that they may readily be utilized by supervisors or principals. He is now planning to make a general investigation covering as many schools as he can reach. He wishes to announce that he will distribute 10,000 sets of his standard tests, together with the necessary instructions for the use of these tests, to schools. Up to this number he intends to distribute the material free of charge. He is also prepared to furnish the same material at cost to any workers who may be willing to co-operate on this basis in their schools. He has had the tests plated, so that the preparation of reproductions will be very simple and economical. The actual working time required for a grade is twenty-four minutes. The instructions to the children on taking up the papers will, however, consume some time, and Mr. Courtis recommends that the test be tried in two sections, one part each day. He has prepared record sheets for the compilation and stating of results. He finds that the time required for scoring, entering, and computing the average grades and variability of groups of fifty children does not exceed two hours.

Co-operative Tests in Arithmetic

The project which Mr. Courtis has undertaken is somewhat novel. We are familiar with tests that have been made by individual students in various departments, but an effort to secure the co-operation of a large number of superintendents or teachers for the use of a carefully prepared series of tests promises much for our educational system, if it can be successfully carried out. The difficulties which arise in attempting to compare the results of tests of this sort are well known to educational investigators

Valid Method for Such Tests

If the tests are not conducted in uniform manner at different centers, and if the results are not computed in exactly the same way, comparisons are misleading. The value of the method, therefore, is one of the chief considerations. Mr. Courtis has given this question of method much attention. He has a large array of careful workers who are prepared to stand sponsors for the efficiency of his method. The *Elementary School Teacher* has published three of Mr. Courtis' articles, and the present writer has examined carefully the tests which he has prepared, and we believe there should be the largest confidence for these tests.

C. H. J.

Report of Committee of Seven

This number of the *Elementary School Teacher* carries out the arrangement with the Northern Illinois Superintendents' and Principals' Association, which was announced in February. The full report of the Committee of Seven is presented. This report will be discussed at the May meeting.

Enthusiasm for Nature-Study

The subject of the report is one which is commanding a great deal of attention in the educational world at the present time. A generation ago the suggestion came from Germany that concrete material should be more freely used in the schools: This suggestion was received with enthusiasm by a few elementary school teachers and supervisors. In the meantime in our higher institutions of learning science was beginning to gain a foothold. Physics, chemistry, and biology were seen to be productive for practical life and suitable for mental discipline. Spencer's *Essays on Education* set forth in vigorous terms the advantages of studying science, and the enthusiasm which had been fostered by discussions of concrete education was increased in intensity and taken up by a larger circle of teachers. Finally, the practical world with its dependence on science for its new mechanical devices and for the principles underlying its development began to make a demand on the schools for the training of children in these lines. This demand gave a new impetus to the movement, and the introduction of nature-study was undertaken as one of the most promising educational innovations of the day.

Criticism of Nature-Study

The experiment has been under way for some time, and the enthusiasm with which many teachers took up the work has waned, if not disappeared entirely. Several systems of nature-study have had their day, and dropped out of sight. Several guiding principles of selection have been advocated, accepted, tried, discarded, and finally forgotten, except by the student of educational history. We have now reached the period of serious reconsideration. The enthusiasm of extreme youth is gone; there is a frank recognition of serious difficulties, and on the whole a better and safer attitude of conservative study of the problem.

Social Interests of Young Children

It is perhaps pretentious for the writer to attempt to add, by way of editorial comment, to the discussion of the committee, but there is one consideration which is significant and so likely to be overlooked by the specialist that it may be worth setting down as a part of the debate. It is not true that a child's strongest impulse is in the direction of attention to natural objects. A child is absorbed in people more than in things. A child's interest in color always attaches itself to some person. Children want the things that they see other children have. Social observation is very keen, at least as early as observation of objects. When observation of objects begins, it is superficial. It is guided by accidental motives, not by any principles of scientific analysis. For these reasons young children will not study objects in the lower grades with the devotion which they can be induced to show in the pursuits of the social arts, such as reading and writing. Sometimes conservative teachers have bewailed the competition between the newer subjects and the fundamental social arts. There is no need of anxiety. The fundamental arts of reading, writing, and number have demonstrated their vitality so fully that they can be relied on to outlive any excess of enthusiasm in other directions. The fundamental fact of human nature is that social interests are the most potent interests. Indeed, science is the formulation of certain principles of the relation between the external world and the scientific thinker. Science does not come from without. It is cultivated from within. There is some danger that the advocates of nature-study will forget this dependence of science upon inner motives. They forget that the child cannot get science from things. Science is the best and most productive thought of man. Science deals with things, but it is not made by things nor dictated by things. Things have always been in the world, but science is very young; it came through co-operative human thinking. The present writer believes that such considerations show the necessity of much training in language as a means of scientific progress. He would look for a check in the nature-study movement so long as that movement over-emphasizes things.

C. H. J.